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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6075
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0303
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4542
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3857
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7398
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4950
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1133
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI TH 0981
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 0003
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3136
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0777

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000478

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: DEMOCRACY ADVOCATES GEAR UP TO RALLY PUBLIC

REF: A. RANGOON 451

[1](#)B. RANGOON 387

[1](#)C. RANGOON 335

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Classified By: Poloff Dean Tidwell for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The 88 Generation Students and other democracy activists continue their campaigns to mobilize the public, with the goal of preparing an effective public response when the regime unveils its dictated constitution. Meanwhile, the regime is using its proxy mass-member organizations increasingly to crack down on peaceful demonstrators. Disappointed with apparent paralysis among the NLD leadership and doubtful that Aung San Suu Kyi will be freed soon, some activists want to press for the release of imprisoned journalist Win Tin, who they hope would effectively lead and unite the pro-democracy opposition. Prominent activist Su Su Nway has been admitted to a Rangoon hospital. She is under police guard and under the treatment of her personal physician, and may have initiated a hunger strike. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Last Sunday, the 88 Generation Students (88GS), wrapped up their latest campaign, "White Sunday," a series of weekly visits to the families of political prisoners. The 88GS members staged the program's finale by visiting Aung San Suu Kyi's cousins on May 20. 88GS leader Min Ko Naing declared the campaign a success and 88GS spokesperson Jimmy told us the campaign was designed to "warm up" the public to prepare them to say "no" when the regime puts its constitution to a public vote. They will continue to visit the families of political prisoners to show their support for those with the courage to speak out against the regime. They hope to rally opposition to the regime's constitution across the country to the regime's roadmap and force the regime to allow a more inclusive process in drafting a constitution and establishing a democratically elected government.

13. (C) The 88GS do not end this campaign without plans for another. They informed us that they will issue a message to China and Russia on May 23 and 23 emphasizing that their double veto on the Burma resolution in the UNSC emboldened the regime to increase its harassment of the pro-democracy opposition. The 88GS also told us that various exile groups are coordinating demonstrations in front of Chinese and Russian Embassies around the world for May 30, the anniversary of the attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's convoy at Depayin, to protest these countries' support of Burma's "murderous regime."

14. (C) On May 21 we learned that Su Su Nway has been moved from a police interrogation center to a Rangoon hospital. Although she is under police guard and is not allowed visitors, she is now under the care of her personal physician. According to a report we have not yet confirmed, she has initiated a hunger strike. Participants in Su Su Nway's prayer campaign (ref A) have continued to visit pagodas. Three participants were reportedly arrested on May 19 while on their way to pray at a pagoda. Others have not been arrested, although they were watched and photographed.

MORE ACTIVISTS ARE WAITING IN THE WINGS

15. (C) Gan Bee Ya, an activist monk from the Monk Youth Association told us that a concocted referendum for a new constitution can be prevented only through a strong public outcry. He wants to encourage more monks to actively oppose the regime's constitution. Gan Bee Ya claimed other activists are waiting for the right moment to act in a showdown that they believe requires the people of Burma to take a definitive stand. According to the monk, if the people do not clearly oppose the regime's constitution, they must resign themselves to a perpetual military dictatorship.

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REGIME PROXIES DO THE DIRTY WORK

16. (C) Jimmy said it is clear the regime is using its mass organizations, including the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) and the People's Militia, as their first line of defense against increasing pro-democracy activities (ref B). Jimmy believes two key USDA leaders, Minister of Labor U Thaung and Minister of Industry-1 Aung Thaung, are behind this plan. Local USDA members, posing as ordinary citizens, are ordered to oppose demonstrators and White Sunday participants and even urged to attack them in order to "maintain community peace." 88GS believes an attack by the USDA on peaceful activists could instigate the activists' supporters in the community to counterattack, giving the regime a pretext to arrest the activists. The 88GS hopes to avoid this trap.

17. (C) We heard separately from another contact that twenty-one USDA groups of twenty-five members each have been established in Rangoon division to crack down on public opposition movements. The recruits are primarily unemployed vagrants and were trained in a military training camp in Hlegu Township. There have also been disturbing press reports that USDA youth in Mandalay Division were given full army uniforms, minus weapons, in order to look like soldiers and confuse and intimidate the public.

WAITING ON THE NLD

18. (C) Following two separate meetings between NLD and the 88GS leaders, Jimmy said 88GS members are increasingly frustrated over the NLD's reluctance to endorse any specific plan of action in response to the anticipated roll-out of a draft constitution (ref A). Recent activities by the 88GS and other activists have given them a higher public profile than the NLD, but the 88GS says it wants to avoid eclipsing the NLD, which it believes still has the mandate of the people.

¶9. (C) Chin politician Pu Chin Sian Thang, a member of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP), expressed frustration to us that the NLD has not yet briefed CRPP members on a meeting the NLD uncles had with the police chief on Union Day (February 12) during which the police chief reportedly told the uncles that the CRPP was an illegal organization. The NLD's silence has fueled rumors among some MPs from ethnic parties that the NLD Executive Committee plans to officially abolish the CRPP as part of some future deal between the NLD and the regime.

LOOKING FOR A WAY FORWARD

¶10. (C) Labor rights advocate Aye Myint, founder of Leading Stars (ref C), said the regime may not reconvene the National Convention again until 2008. He said regime leaders may be worried the constitution might not be approved in a public referendum due to the recent upswing in demonstrations and the unpredictable political climate. He believes the regime's current insecurity could bring the regime to the negotiating table with the opposition. Aye Myint said Special Branch police questioned him in early May and asked his advice on how to improve the political climate in Burma. His discussions with the police gave Aye Myint hope that he may be able to facilitate negotiations between the regime and the opposition. He requested to meet political prisoners Win Tin and Dr. Zaw Myint Maung, two NLD members who have been imprisoned since 1990.

¶11. (C) Aye Myint and monk Gan Bee Ya both believe that if Win Tin were released, he could help the NLD form a more coherent strategy to move forward, rather than simply working to keep the party from being deregistered. Both men said it

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might be better to focus on getting Win Tin released rather than ASSK, because they do not believe the regime will ever release her. Insisting on her release, they speculated, might only delay a political solution in Burma. Other contacts of ours disagree. They believe the regime would not release Win Tin because he is a charismatic person and strategic thinker with the same potential to lead the opposition as ASSK. They also said if Win Tin were released he could split the NLD, as many NLD members might follow him instead of the uncles.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: While the NLD uncles continue to circle the wagons, with no release of ASSK in sight other activist groups are beginning to think ahead. They want to mobilize the public and strategize on the best way to counteract the anticipated debut of the regime's draft constitution. While the activists continue their campaigns to convince the regime to engage in genuine dialogue, they will emphasize the peaceful and law-abiding nature of their movements to focus attention on the regime's unlawful and repressive response.
END COMMENT.
STOLTZ